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SUBJECT: PEACE MARCHES OVERSHADOWED BY PRO-CHAVEZ GROUPS

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Downes for 1.4 (D)

11. (C) Summary. Both pro-Chavez and civil society groups organized marches March 6 in 12 states in Venezuela to register their opinions on Venezuela-Colombian tensions. The pro-Chavez groups vandalized several Colombian consulates and harassed consulate workers. In contrast, civil society groups demonstrated peacefully along the border asking for the governments of both Colombia and Venezuela to work for a peaceful solution. The actions taken by pro-government forces against Co'.I)[ad^]Q1jtYpbQe Colombian Ambassador to Venezuela and his staff on March 3. He did not, however, close the 15 Colombian consulates. Pro-Chavez groups made up of State Assembly deputies, militants of the United Socialist Part of Venezuela (PSUV), PDVSA workers, pro-Chavez students, Bolivarian circle members and the Communist Part of Venezuela (PCV) vandalized Colombian consulates in the states of Tachira, Carabobo, Merida, Zulia and Anzoategui. They also marched peacefully to the Colombian Embassy in the opposition-controlled Chacao borough of Caracas. In Zulia and Tachira groups painted the walls of Colombian consulates with phrases such as "Long Live Raul Reyes, and the FARC," and "Uribe is an Evil Fascist Imperialist" and hurled insults at consulate workers. In Anzoategui protesters blocked the entrance to the Colombian consulates and said they would not leave until the consulate workers vacated the consulate. In the state of Carabobo, pro-opposition students organized a march for peace which was quickly taken over by pro-Chavez student groups, leaving 16 students injured. In Merida, PDVSA workers protested in front of the Colombian consulate.

We Want Peace

13. (SBU) Along the border, groups of workers, housewives, drivers and students marched in support of peace from Tachira to La Parada, in Colombia. Upon arrival, they exchanged flags with their Colombian counterparts and both sides pledged to work together to avoid conflict between their two countries. Opposition parties are planning a peaceful demonstration in Caracas on March 8.

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